CAPTAIN GEORGE'S
Penny Dreadful
TORONTO, JUNE 19, 1981 NUMBER 643

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THIS WEEK The entire receipts of this theatre—and all other Famous Players Theatres coast-to-coast . . will be used to purchase the New Victory Loan Bonds! . . . .

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1942

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with BING CROSBY · BOB HOPE · DOROTHY LAMOUR

Bargain Matinee Tomorrow 10.a.m. — 25c to 1 p.m.

A WEEKLY REVIEW

BILL BLACK

MONUMENT VALLEY MEMORIES II: To attempt an adequate description of that part of Monument Valley as can be seen from the Navajo Visitors Centre is, to say the least, a Herculean task. To convey the spirit of the place to someone who has not seen with his own eyes becomes impossible. Those of us familiar with the valley through the eye and camera of Mr. Ford only, are, of course, somewhat deceived. What looks to be endless miles of fantastic structures, each separate and more beautiful than the last, turns out, in fact, to be three or four shots of the same structure, photographed from another angle. Contrary to the breathtaking vistas and apparent areas of country miles from any habitation, turns out, upon first-hand examination, to be a two hundred yard long strip, thirty feet or so from the roadway. We forget, we believers, that Ethan, Sam, Mose, Capt. Brittles, Kirby, Owen Thursday, Sgt. Tyree, and the rest weren't out there by themselves. Ford was there. Winton Hoch, his assistants, the lighting guys, the sound guys, the grips, the props men, the hairdressers, the make-up people, the wranglers, the rest of the crew, and ALL of the equipment necessary. All that was out there, too. And to get there, back then, would have been just about as easy as it is today, and it ain't easy. I know. I been there. Those roads, such as they are, are really rough. We had a mini-bus, we intrepid explorers, and it wasn't a picnic. I, especially, was looking for "Searchers" locations and, at one point on our day trip, I asked our guide, David Clark (don't let the name fool you ... he was related, somehow, but related to Bob Many Mules. THE Bob Many Mules, Virginia!) if he knew of any caves in the area. Yes, he said, after some thought, there's one I can think of on Susie Somebody-or-other's place. "Take me there!" I screamed, my heart a-flutter. Well, it was a pretty good road up to the hogan, but I remember thinking to myself, "God, that cave was someplace in the back of beyond. There weren't no hogans or corrals or nuthin', jes' bare space." It wasn't much from the outside, this cave, and it was full of wooden poles, an old washing machine, old tires, and sundry other miscellaneous junque the Navajo seem to collect around their dwellings, but undaunted, I jumped from the van, and bellowing mightily that it sure looked right, but I'd have to go in and look out, I sprinted the last twenty yards or so and clambered over the assorted material, heedless of snakes, scorpions, vicious prairie dogs and other man-eaters. Well, Reverend, I've seen that film 64 times (with no word of a lie) and I'm here to tell you that that cave is THE cave. The angles are right, the shape is right, the view is right. No mistake. Boys, take yer picture, this here's the spot.

Earlier, at that area called the North Window, while the rest of the Secret

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Six mused over the view, Ole Mose went in search of the Comanche burial rock ... "Well, Ethan, here's another one you can score up for your brother." "I don't get it." "What don't you get?" "Indians on the raid generally hide their dead, and if they don't care about us findin' them it only means one thing. They ain't scared of us trackin' 'em, nor catchin' up with 'em, neither." "You can back out any time you want, Nesby." And so on ...

Well, I found 'em. The nit-pickers of the group (no names, we're all friends, after all) said I wuz crazy. You don't think I'm crazy, do ya Ma'am? Well, I ain't crazy, 'cause those is them. Right shape. Right backgrounds. Right rocks. Even to the wall behind, which we see in Duke's lines ... "Why don't you finish the job?" Bang. Bang. "What good did that do ya?" "By what you preach, none. But what that Comanche believes, ain't got no eyes, can't enter the spirit land, has to wander forever between the winds. You'll get it, Reverend." Like I say, 64 times.

Getting back to my original tack, the whole area, that is, Ford's Monument Valley is roughly five square miles. That's all brother. Five square miles, with maybe a side trip here and there. Tombstone, or what's left of it, is right out in front of Gouldings. Gouldings itself is variously Fort Stark, Fort Apache, etc. She Wore a Yellow Ribbon thunderstorm is right out there too. The Edwards ranch, for which we looked, but alas, is up under Sentinel Mesa, right off the main road. Oh, I could go on, but the point of all this is simple. Even when you stand there, holding a piece of the gate of Fort Stark in your hand, or right at those disputed rocks, or any of fifty places as familiar as your own back yard, and you see their relation to each other, the distances and the deceptions, one thought keeps recurring. Here's the reality. The film is the magic, and here you are, at, in and around the reality, and you know what?

It don't make one damn bit of difference.

THE RATING GAME: Writing in the NY Times this week, Aljean Harmetz raised an interesting point about the PG rating given in the U. S. to Raiders of the Lost Ark, a rating which allows any child, no matter how young, to see the movie by himself.

"Full of melting skulls, red-hot pokers, a pit teeming with hundreds of writhing asps and cobras, and more than 60 deaths by gun, poison dart, propeller blade, knife and the wrath of God, Raiders of the Lost Ark is a technically breathtaking, eminently satisfying, giant Saturday matinee serial. Following an early morning screening of the movie, however, three movie-sophisticated 10-year-old children of industry reporters had nightmares. One child couldn't shake his nightmare for nearly a week." The story goes on to quote the chairman of the Motion Pictures Ratings Board: "I had a lot of problems with this picture, as did my colleagues. But the ratings system would have been less believable if we had given it an R Rating and said no one under 17 could see it without parent or guardian."

PETE HARRIS

ON THE SPOT: If you've ever read The Maltese Falcon, you're probably familiar with the Burritt Street passage in Chapter II, Death in the Fog, which comes just after Sam Spade receives word that his partner, Miles Archer, has been shot:

"Where Bush Street roofed Stockton before slipping downhill into Chinatown, Spade paid his fare and left the taxicab. San Francisco's night-fog, thin, clammy and penetrant, blurred the street. A few yards from where Spade had dismissed the taxicab a small group of men stood looking up an alley. Two women stood with a man on the other side of Bush Street, looking at the alley. There were faces at windows.

"Spade crossed the sidewalk between iron-railed hatchways that opened above bare ugly stairs, went to the parapet, and resting his hands on the damp coping, looked down into Stockton Street ... Spade turned from the parapet and walked up Bush Street to the alley where men were grouped. A uniformed policeman chewing gum under an enameled sign that said Burritt St. in white against dark blue put out an arm and asked:

"'What do you want here?'

"'I'm Sam Spade. Tom Polhaus phoned me.'"

And so on, into the night.

A few years ago, during a visit to San Francisco, I attempted to retrace the footsteps of Sam Spade and his creator, Dashiell Hammett, and one of the places I visited was the Bush and Stockton location and nearby Burritt Street. As I recall it, the street sign was white on blue and could well have been the original sign that Hammett saw as he walked around San Francisco evolving the story of Spade, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, Gutman, Joel Cairo, and The Black Bird. I stood where Spade stood in the story, looking down into Stockton Street, and then walked the few paces to Burritt. There were no cops, no crowd, no faces at windows, no body waiting part way down the vacant lot sloping from Burritt down to Stockton. In fact, there was no vacant lot anymore. But it was night, and it was San Francisco, and the imagination can work wonders ...

More recently, a member of the Secret Six, Wally Seeley, was in San Francisco, and he too visited the vicinity of Bush, Stockton and Burritt. He discovered that changes have been made even since my visit. The sign at the corner of the alley is dark lettering on a white background and reads simply, "Burritt." And there has been an addition, one that all Hammett adherents will appreciate. Just under the Burritt street sign, a plaque is affixed to the wall of the building. There is no indication as to who placed it there. It says, simply:

On approximately this spot
Miles Archer,
partner of Sam Spade,
was done in by
Brigid O'Shaughnessy.